

Message Text

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PAGE 01 THE HA 03322 01 OF 02 291112Z
ACTION EUR-12

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 THE HAGUE 3322

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, NL
SUBJ: THE MOLUCCAN AFFAIR

1. SUMMARY: THE FEELING OF SATISFACTION FOR HAVING ENDED THE MOLUCCAN SIEGES HAS GIVEN WAY TO REALIZATION THAT THE REAL PROBLEM REMAINS TO BE TACKLED. FACED WITH A DILEMMA, THE GON HAS MADE AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE POLICY BUT HAS SO FAR LARGELY AVOIDED ACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MILITARY STRIKES WHICH ENDED THE OCCUPATION OF THE SCHOOL AND THE TRAIN HIJACK TWO WEEKS AGO OCCASIONED WIDE SATISFACTION THAT THE GON FINALLY CEASED TO BE HOSTAGE ON ITS OWN TERRITORY TO SMALL GROUP OF YOUNG MOLUCCAN TERRORISTS. THE SATISFACTION, HOWEVER, WAS MIXED WITH GRIEF OVER THE LOSS OF LIFE. PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL SPOKE FOR MANY WHEN HE CHARACTERIZED THE DECISION TO USE FORCE AS A DEFEAT. THE DECISION NEVERTHELESS DREW NEARLY UNANIMOUS POLITICAL SUPPORT, REFLECTING A WIDELY HELD CONVICTION THAT THE GON HAD FIRST DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SEEK A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. MOREOVER, THE COMPETENCE WITH WHICH THE MILITARY OPERATION WAS CARRIED OUT GAINED WIDE APPLAUSE, PARTICULARLY FROM THOSE WHO HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY ITCHY TO
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PAGE 02 THE HA 03322 01 OF 02 291112Z

DEAL WITH THE MOLUCCAN TERRORISTS ON THEIR OWN TERMS.

3. WHAT REMAINS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM HOW TO DEAL WITH A 40,000 STRONG DISAFFECTED SOUTH MOLUCCAN COMMUNITY HARBORING A NUMBER OF YOUNG EXTREMISTS. THE RESORT TO ARMED TERRORISM REFLECTED THEIR FEELINGS OF ISOLATION AND DISAFFECTION. THE HERO'S BURIAL OF THE SIX TERRORISTS KILLED IN THE

ACTION FURTHER FANNED FEELINGS OF BETRAYAL AND HOSTILITY. MOST IMPORTANT, MOLUCCANS CONTINUE TO FEEL THAT THE DUTCH OWE THEM SUPPORT FOR THEIR POLITICAL CAUSE.

4. EXCITED FEELINGS NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL DISTURBANCES LAST WEEK IN A COUPLE OF TOWNS WITH SUBSTANTIAL SOUTH MOLUCCAN CONCENTRATIONS. WHILE THESE DISTURBANCES, INVOLVING YOUNG SOUTH MOLUCCANS, DID NOT ASSUME RIOT PROPORTIONS, THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY CONSIDERABLE MATERIAL DAMAGE AND IT TOOK UNITS OF THE STATE POLICE TO RESTORE ORDER. THE MEDIA GAVE THEM HEADLINE ATTENTION, FUELING PUBLIC APPREHENSION. THE DUTCH INTERNAL SECURITY SERVICE, UNDER FIRE FOR SUPPOSEDLY NOT ISSUING ADEQUATE WARNING ABOUT PREVIOUS INCIDENTS, REPORTEDLY FORECAST FURTHER TERRORIST ACTION. THERE HAS BEEN SPECULATION THAT ONCE AGAIN THIS COULD INVOLVE THE HIJACK OF A TRAIN, THOUGH THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHER TYPES OF VIOLENCE--PERHAPS PATTERNED AFTER THE IRA--HAS NOT BEEN EXCLUDED. LAST WEEKEND, THERE WAS HEAVY POLICE ACTIVITY IN MAASTRICHT, APPARENTLY IN RESPONSE TO INDICATIONS OF TROUBLE. ADDING TO PUBLIC UNCERTAINTY, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE AGING LEADERSHIP OF THE SOUTH MOLUCCAN COMMUNITY HAS LITTLE CONTROL OVER YOUNG EXTREMIST ELEMENTS AND IS IN AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT POSITION. TO COMPLICATE MATTERS FURTHER, MANY OF THE MOLUCCAN YOUTHS ARE UNEMPLOYED AND THE INCIDENCE OF THE USE OF HARD DRUGS IS HIGH. ALL THIS ADDS UP TO A POLITICAL TINDERBOX.

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PAGE 03 THE HA 03322 01 OF 02 291112Z

5. FOR A LONG TIME A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS INVOLVING THE SOUTH MOLUCCAN COMMUNITY IN THE NETHERLANDS HAVE SEEMED RIPE FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION. MANY MOLUCCAN COMMUNITIES MAINTAIN THEIR OWN ARMED SECURITY SERVICES. USE OF UNIFORMS HAS BEEN COMMON. IT IS AN OPEN SECRET THAT MANY MOLUCCANS POSSESS ARMS. SOME MOLUCCAN NEIGHBORHOODS HAVE BEEN IN EFFECT CLOSED TO DUTCH POLICE. YET THE GOVERNMENT MOSTLY HAS LOOKED THE OTHER WAY. FOLLOWING THE TRAIN HIJACK AND THE OCCUPATION OF THE INDONESIAN CONSULATE IN AMSTERDAM IN 1975, THE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTED A MIXED COMMISSION BUT IT DID VERY LITTLE MORE THAN ENGAGE IN A SERIES OF INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE MOLUCCAN

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PAGE 01 THE HA 03322 02 OF 02 290853Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 THE HAGUE 3322

PROBLEM. IN OTHER RESPECTS THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED
PASSIVE.

6. EVEN NOW, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE GON WILL FINALLY
MUSTER UP COURAGE TO TAKE THE STEPS WIDELY REGARDED AS
NECESSARY. ON JUNE 22 THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED A WRITTEN
REPORT TO THE SECOND CHAMBER EXPLAINING HOW IT HAD HANDLED
THE RECENT INCIDENTS AND OUTLINING FUTURE STEPS IT PROPOSED
TO TAKE. THESE INCLUDED A TOUGHER APPLICATION OF THE
LEGISLATION PROHIBITING WEAPONS AS WELL AS MEASURES TO PUT
AN END TO SEPARATE MOLUCCAN SECURITY SERVICES. THE REPORT
ALSO MENTIONED POSSIBLE HOUSE TO HOUSE SEARCHES. IN ADDITION,
THE GOVERNMENT IS EXAMINING THE POSSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING
THE CONCEPT OF CONSPIRACY INTO THE CRIMINAL CODE. WHILE
THE REPORT SEEMED TO POINT TOWARD A HARDER LINE, THE GOVERN-
MENT WAS SILENT ON HOW QUICKLY AND THOROUGHLY IT PROPOSED
TO MOVE AHEAD.

7. THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE THE FOLLOWING DAY DID LITTEL
TO FILL THIS GAP. ON ONE IMPORTANT POINT THE DEBATE WAS
USEFUL TO THE GOVERNMENT, FOR IT SHOWED AGAIN THE BROAD
APPROVAL ACROSS ALMOST THE ENTIRE POLITICAL SPECTRUM FOR
THE DECISION TO USE FORCE. CURIOUSLY, THE DEBATE REMAINED
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PAGE 02 THE HA 03322 02 OF 02 290853Z

LIMITED LARGELY TO AN EXCHANGE OF GENERALITIES. AT THE
END, SPEAKERS HAD MERELY ENJOYED A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO
GET THINGS OFF THIER CHEST. FEW FOCUSSED ON THE POLICY
OPTIONS OPEN TO THE GON. FEWER STILL MADE SPECIFIC
SUGGESTIONS. IN OUR CONTRACTS WITH MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT,
WE WERE STRUCK BY THE APPARENTLY PREVAILING ATTITUDE THAT
DEALING WITH THE MOLUCCAN PROBLEM WAS AN ISSUE FOR THE
GOVERNMENT AND NOT FOR THE PARLIAMENT. OBVIOUSLY, THE

MOLUCCANS ARE A HOT POLITICAL POTATO. FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER STOEL TOLD PARLIAMENT THAT THE GON SEES NO POINT IN TAKING THE ISSUE TO THE UNITED NATIONS. SUCH A MOVE IS PROBABLY NOT IN THE PLANS OF THE MOLUCCAN LEADERSHIP EITHER, THOUGH SOME MOLUCCAN GROUPS HAVE WRITTEN LETTERS TO AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND SENT COPIES TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

8. OBVIOUSLY, THE GON MUST FIND A WAY IN WHICH TO CARRY OUT ITS ANNOUNCED TOUGHER LINE WITH RESPECT TO WEAPONS, UNIFORMS, SECURITY SERVICES AND ROWDYNESS. THE MAJOR CONSTRAINT WILL BE THAT OVERLY EAGER POLICE ACTION COULD PRECIPITATE FURTHER DISTURBANCES. AT THE SAME TIME THE GON WILL HAVE TO FOCUS ON THE NECESSITY OF DEALING WITH THE SOUTH MOLUCCANS IN POLITICAL TERMS AND TO ENGAGE NOT JUST THE AGING LEADERSHIP BUT ALSO THE YOUNGER ELEMENTS IN THE MOLUCCAN COMMUNITY IN A DIALOGUE ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL AIMS. THERE IS BEGINNING TO BE EDITORIAL COMMENT TO THIS EFFECT. THE OBJECTIVE MUST BE TO REDUCE THE GAP BETWEEN THESE AIMS AND POLITICAL REALITY. THE GON MUST SOMEHOW CONVINCE THE SOUTH MOLUCCANS THAT TERRORISM IS NOT A POTENTIALLY SUCCESSFUL NOR ACCEPTABLE TACTIC. THE GON MAY ALSO HAVE TO EXPLORE PROSPECTS FOR REPATRIATION OR FIND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNGER MOLUCCANS TO VERIFY FOR THEMSELVES WHAT THE MOLUCCAN ISLANDS ARE LIKE TODAY. THIS WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK. THE CHANCE EXISTS, MOREOVER, THAT IT WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 THE HA 03322 02 OF 02 290853Z

BE MADE HARDER BY FURTHER PRECIPITOUS ACTS OF MOLUCCAN VIOLENCE. WHAT THE GON CAN NO LONGER AFFORD IS TO CONTINUE TO NEGLECT THE PROBLEM. MCCLOSKEY

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